

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7491
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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2960

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM PINS PDIP PROP LA CH
SUBJECT: POLITICAL PRISONERS IN PHONGSALY

REF A VIENTIANE 2293, B VIENTIANE 2935

1. A LAO WOMAN WHOSE HUSBAND IS A PRISONER IN A
PHONGSALY WORKCAMP TOLD EMBOFF DECEMBER 21 THAT SHE
HAD MET THREE DAYS EARLIER WITH A CHINESE BUSINESSMAN
WHO WAS RELEASED IN LATE NOVEMBER FROM A PHONGSALY
DETENTION CENTER. THE CHINESE MAN REPORTEDLY SAID
THAT HE WAS FREED BECAUSE THE PRC EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE
MADE REPRESENTATIONS TO THE LAO GOVERNMENT ON HIS
BEHALF. HE ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE PRC EMBASSY
IS DOING THE SAME FOR OTHER CHINESE PRISONERS IN THE
PHONGSALY WORK CAMPS.

2. THE CHINESE MAN TOLD THE LAO WOMAN THAT HE HAD
WITNESSED THE FIRING SQUAD EXECUTION OF THEIR MUTUAL
FRIEND WHO WAS CAUGHT TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE
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CAMP. ALTHOUGH THE CHINESE MAN TOLD THE LAO WOMAN
THAT HE HAD SEEN NO INCIDENTS OF TORTURE, HE DID SAY
THAT THE GOVERNMENT REQUIRED ALL PRISONERS TO WITNESS
THE EXECUTION.

3. THE CHINESE MAN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE PONGSALY

WORK CAMPS WERE A NETWORK OF SMALL UNFENCED VILLAGES SCATTERED THROUGHOUT A RIVER VALLEY. THE LAO WOMAN TOLD EMBOFF THAT SHE BELIEVED THERE WERE ABOUT 8000 PRISONERS IN THE WORK CAMPS.

4. THE CHINESE MAN TOLD THE LAO WOMAN THAT CONDITIONS IN THE CAMPS ARE ROUGHT BUT BEARABLE FOR THE PRISONERS. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIED BASIC TOOLS LIKE SHOVELS AND HAND SAWS TO PRISONERS WHO MUST THEN CONSTRUCT THEIR OWN SHELTERS. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIED SUFFICIENT RICE BUT THAT THE PRISONERS HAD TO PROVIDE ANYTHING ELSE TO EAT THEMSELVES BY GARDENING AND GATHERING.

5. A LAO PILOT SEPARATELY TOLD THE LAO WOMAN WHO IN TURN TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE FLIES A SUPPLY OF ABOUT 50 TO 60 SACKS OF STICKY RICE ABOUT EVERY FOUR MONTHS FROM VIENTIANE TO PHONGSALY FOR THE CAMPS.

6. ACCORDING TO THE CHINESE MAN, ON AN AVERAGE DAY PRISONERS AWOKE AT 5:00 A.M. TO TEND THEIR GARDENS OR WORK IN THE RICE FIELDS. LATER IN THE MORNING THE CAMP INMATES ATTENDED POLITICAL LECTURES. IN THE AFTERNOON THEY PARTICIPATED IN POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WHERE COMMUNIST GUARDS OBSERVED THE "CORRECTNESS OF THEIR THINKING". THE CHINESE MAN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT PRISONERS WHO WERE JUDGED "REFORMED" BY THE CAMP GUARDS WOULD BE SENT TO FARMING VILLAGES TO LEAD POLITICAL SEMINARS.

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